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"The Race of Life": Republican Revisionism Revisited

Isaac Kramnick is the Richard J. Schwartz Professor of Government at Cornell where he has taught since 1972. Prior to coming to Cornell he had taught at Harvard, Brandeis, and Yale. He is from rural Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard and Cambridge University.

Professor Kramnick has taught and written principally in the area of English and American political thought and history. He has written or edited some 20 books among which his Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole won the Conference of British Studies Prize for best book on British politics. His books also include studies of Edmund Burke, a biography of the English socialist Harold Laski, an edition of the Federalist Papers and the recent Godless Constitution: A Moral Defense of the Secular State which he co-authored with R. Laurence Moore of Cornell’s History Department.

He has been the recipient of a number of awards, fellowships, and honours. He is a fellow of Britain’s Royal Historical Society and served in 1989 as President of the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies. In 1998 he was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. At Cornell he has received the Clark Award for distinguished teaching, the Steven Weiss Prize for teaching, and in 1996 he was chosen through student ballots to be the Cornell Sun’s “favourite professor of the year.”

Select Bibliography

Books

- The Portable Burke (edited with introductory essay), (Viking Penguin, 1999).
- Tocqueville’s Writings on America (edited with introductory essay), (Viking Penguin, forthcoming).

Articles


Introduction to the Paper

Despite republican scholarship's dismissal of Locke from importance and influence, Lockean liberal individualism is alive and well in Anglo-American political thought from the Eighteenth century forward. The case will be made by tracing the history and persistence of the central metaphor in the liberal imagination, "the race of life".

Suggested Reading

Joyce Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination (1992)


Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (1955)

Isaac Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America (1990)


Donald Winch, Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision (1978)